More about the Sighting of the Moon

Question: We received news in the newspaper that the moon for Eid was sighted in Bombay and the Qaadhi announced that Eid would be celebrated the next day. Someone also brought the news that some people in Dhamra sighted the moon, because of which some people ended their fasts and performed the Eid salaah. What is the status of such news? Can the fast be terminated for this? Two persons who had been sitting in I'tikaaf did not end their fasts and did not perform the Eid salaah. They remained seated in one section of the Masjid and went the following day to Jakapli to perform the Eid salaah there. What is the ruling in their case? Please reply in detail.

Answer: Unlike the celebrations of other faiths, the occasions of Eidul Fitr, Eidul Adhaa and Ramadhaan are not mere celebrations, but acts of Ibaadah. They have specific times and they may not be carried out before their times. These times depend on the sighting of the moon. It is because of this that Rasulullaah ρ said, "Do not start fasting until you see the moon and do not stop fasting until you see the moon. If the sky is overcast, then calculate (the month as thirty days)."[1]

It is stated in the books of Fiqh that if four people apply their minds to determine the direction of the Qibla in total darkness and each one of them perform his salaah in completely different directions, the salaah of each of them will be valid.[2]

Therefore, the day on which you people starts to fast and the day that you celebrate Eid, these will be regarded as the days of Ramadhaan and Eid. You will then receive the promises rewards for Ramadhaan and Eid without any deficit in them whatsoever. What then is the need to be perplexed and agitated? If it happens that Saudi Arabia celebrated Eid on Friday, Baghdad on a Saturday, Pakistan on a Sunday and India on a Monday, all will be correct and accepted by Allaah. As for those who have not used the regulations of the Shari'ah and proper witnesses in determining these days, their acts will remain doubtful.

We will now address your questions after this brief introduction:

(1) The news received in the newspaper and the information of one person stating that some people in Dhamra sighted the moon are both not viable sources of information according to the Shari'ah.[3] This will not be regarded as *Mustafeedh* information that the Shari'ah will consider. According to the research of Allaama Rahmati رحمه الله, the meaning of *Mustafeedh* information is that several groups of people present themselves to testify that the people of their area had seen the moon and are fasting. It will not suffice to merely hear the news, even if it is widespread, without knowing exactly whom the news is coming from. It can therefore not at all be right to terminate the fast and celebrate Eid on the basis of unreliable information, when the sky is clear. In such a case, it is necessary for a large group of people to testify to seeing the moon and the Qaadhi or Mufti will endorse the testimony only when there is no question of doubt.[4]

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[1] Bukhaari (Vol.1 Pg.256).
[2] Fataawaa Ibn Taymiyyah (Vol.2 Pg.202).
[3] *Shaami* (Vol.2 Pg.129).
[4] Hidaayah (Vol.1 Pg.196), *Rasaa'ilul Arkaan* (Pg.207), *Maa Laa Budda Minhu* (Pg.93) abd *Fataawaa Aalamgeeri* (Vol.1 Pg.198).

It is therefore necessary in the stated case for the people to repeat their fasts, unless it is established afterwards that the moon was sighted for certain.

The two persons who remained in I'tikaaf without breaking their fasts are to be congratulated since they realised that neither the fast nor the I'tikaaf could be terminated without evidence valid in the Shari'ah.

Hadhrat Kurayb τ returned to Madinah from Shaam during Ramadhaan, Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Abbaas τ asked him when they had sighted the moon in Shaam. When he replied that they had seen it on Friday, Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Abbaas τ asked whether he had seen the new moon himself. He replied that others had seen it and that even Hadhrat Mu'aawiya τ had fasted (some narrations state that Hadhrat Mu'aawiya τ himself saw the moon). Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Abbaas τ then told him that they had seen the moon only on the Saturday evening and will therefore complete the fasts according to their sighting until they sighted the next new moon. "Is the sighting of Mu'aawiya τ also not sufficient for you?" Hadhrat Kurayb τ asked. "No," replied Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Abbaas τ, "This is what Rasulullaah ρ taught us."[5]

Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Abbaas τ did not act according to the word of Hadhrat Kurayb τ because he did not formally testify to the sighting by others and even if he did, his evidence was inadmissible **because the testimony of one person cannot compel a Qaadhi to rule in his favour.**[6]

And Allaah knows best what is most correct.

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[5] Tirmidhi (Vol.1 Pg.87).
[6] *Bahrur Raa'iq* (Vol.2 Pg.27).